

Construct Your Future (CYF)

**Supporting Improved Job Retention Rates for New Starters in
Construction**

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Construct Your Future (CYF)

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Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)

Project Title:

Construct Your Future (CYF) – Supporting Improved Job Retention Rates for New Starters in Construction

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Main Contact:

Stacey Allan

Development Manager (Skills Delivery)

Hampshire County Council

Stacey.allan@hants.gov.uk

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1. Project Summary

Construct Your Future (CYF) was a CITB-funded mentoring and retention project designed to support new entrants into the construction industry during the critical early stages of employment. The project responded to industry concerns regarding workforce shortages and the high number of new entrants leaving construction employment within their first few months.

Building on the success of the Technical Construction Skills project, which supported individuals to gain CSCS cards, enter employment and develop their careers, CYF provided tailored mentoring and wraparound support to apprentices, Skills Bootcamp participants and newly employed construction workers.

The project worked with employers, colleges, training providers and local partners to help participants remain in employment by addressing barriers including financial pressures, transport issues, workplace relationships, confidence, wellbeing and career progression. Support was delivered primarily through one-to-one mentoring, telephone contact, text messaging and enrichment sessions.

The project also strengthened relationships across the sector through extensive employer engagement, stakeholder collaboration and the development of referral pathways.

Evidence gathered throughout delivery demonstrated positive impacts on confidence, learning progress, resilience and employment retention. Whilst the project achieved good outcomes, future delivery would benefit from a more sustainable funding model that reflects the staffing resource required to provide intensive mentoring and retention support.

2. Introduction

The UK construction sector faces significant workforce challenges, with an estimated 225,000 additional workers required by 2027. Whilst considerable efforts are made to attract new people into construction, retaining them remains a challenge. Research suggests that over 70% of new employees leave construction jobs within their first three months.

Construct Your Future (CYF) was commissioned by CITB to address this challenge by supporting individuals entering employment across the construction sector.

The project evolved from the successful European Social Fund (ESF) Technical Construction Skills programme, which focused on supporting individuals to obtain CSCS cards, enter employment and progress into construction careers. As participants moved into employment, apprenticeships and Skills Bootcamps, there was a recognised need for ongoing support to help them remain in the industry and overcome challenges experienced during their first months of employment.

CYF was therefore developed to provide mentoring, guidance and practical support aimed at improving retention, building resilience and encouraging long-term career progression within construction.

3. Project Aims and Objectives

The project aimed to improve retention rates amongst new entrants to the construction industry through structured mentoring and wraparound support.

Objectives included:

- Supporting new entrants during the first months of employment.
- Improving resilience and confidence.
- Addressing barriers preventing sustained employment.
- Strengthening relationships between employers, training providers and support organisations.
- Supporting apprenticeship retention and progression.
- Improving awareness of career opportunities within construction.
- Encouraging long-term employment within the sector.

4. Project Budget and Funding

The project was funded by CITB.

No additional third-party funding was secured specifically for project delivery. However, significant in-kind support was received from employers, colleges, training providers and stakeholder organisations through participation in steering groups, referrals, partnership activity and learner support.

5. Project Approach

Prior to delivery, significant work was undertaken to establish the infrastructure required for successful project delivery. This included developing project documentation, participant tracking and monitoring systems, mentoring frameworks, referral pathways, reporting processes, governance arrangements, and marketing materials to support recruitment and engagement.

Marketing activity was implemented from the outset to raise awareness of the programme and establish referral routes. Promotional flyers, digital resources, stakeholder presentations, employer engagement meetings and attendance at construction and employment events were used to promote the project. During one reporting period alone, the project team proactively contacted 59 employers to increase awareness and encourage participation.

Partnership working was central to delivery. Key stakeholders included CITB, FE Colleges, DWP, construction employers, training providers, District and Borough Councils, Tier One contractors and many more. A multi-agency steering group was established to support project oversight, strengthen industry engagement and identify opportunities to increase reach and impact. The project also benefited from strong legacy partnerships developed through previous initiatives, including the Building Lives Academy with Willmott Dixon, Hampshire District and Borough SWAP programmes, Skills Bootcamps, apprenticeship pathways and the Technical Construction Skills programme.

Participants received tailored support through one-to-one mentoring, telephone and text contact, progress reviews, employer liaison and signposting to specialist services where required. Common themes included financial resilience, budgeting, transport and driving issues, housing concerns, wellbeing, workplace conflict, time management and career progression. To complement individual mentoring, a programme of enrichment sessions was developed covering topics such as financial resilience, savings and budgeting, wages and living costs, transport costs, lifestyle choices and Gambling Awareness. Participant feedback was positive, particularly regarding the Gambling Awareness session, which highlighted the value of addressing wider personal challenges that can impact employment retention and progression.

6. KPI Summary

The CYF project tracked participant progression through three key employment sustainability measures linked to signed Employment and Skills Plans (ESPs):

- Number of individuals starting a job.
- Number of individuals sustaining employment for three months.
- Number of individuals sustaining employment for six months.

KPI Performance Overview

KPI	Target	Achieved	Achievement
Individuals starting employment with a signed ESP	300	275	92%
Individuals sustaining employment for 3 months with a signed ESP	300	207	69%
Individuals sustaining employment for 6 months with a signed ESP	300	173	58%

Performance was particularly strong in relation to job starts, with 275 individuals entering employment, representing 92% of target. This demonstrates the effectiveness of referral partnerships, employer engagement activities and established progression pathways from previous training initiatives.

The project achieved 207 participants sustaining employment for at least three months, representing 69% of the target. Given the well-documented challenge of retaining new entrants within construction during the first three months of employment, this represents a positive outcome and demonstrates the value of ongoing mentoring support.

A total of 173 participants sustained employment for six months, achieving 58% of target. A substantial proportion of participants remained engaged in employment beyond the initial transition period. These outcomes were supported by regular mentoring, employer engagement and wraparound support focused on addressing barriers to retention.

Overall, the project supported:

- 275 individuals into employment.
- 207 individuals to remain in employment for at least three months.
- 173 individuals to remain in employment for at least six months.

The results provide strong evidence that retention-focused support can positively influence employment sustainability within the construction sector.

7. Performance Summary

The project achieved strong levels of participant engagement, with telephone and text-based communication proving particularly effective.

Support workers successfully engaged participants throughout their early employment journey and aided across a range of personal and workplace challenges.

The project also supported individuals who had lost employment by helping them identify alternative opportunities within the construction industry.

Learner Impact Evidence

Participant Outcomes and Case Studies

The following examples demonstrate how mentoring and wraparound support helped participants address challenges that could have negatively impacted their confidence, performance, wellbeing and ultimately their ability to remain in employment within the construction industry.

J.T.

During mentoring discussions, J.T. identified concerns around preparing for a maths assessment and balancing learning requirements alongside workplace responsibilities. Through discussions with his mentor, he was encouraged and supported to communicate his needs to both his employer and training provider.

As a result, additional support was put in place by tutors and his employer provided dedicated time to complete learning activities and work towards targets. J.T. reported feeling well supported both in the workplace and at the training centre and continues to benefit from regular one-to-one support. This intervention helped reduce anxiety around his learning commitments and ensured appropriate support mechanisms were in place to sustain his employment and development.

E.M.

E.M. found the transition back into education challenging after spending time away from learning. She highlighted concerns around essay writing and managing competing priorities between work and study.

Through mentoring support, practical tools and guidance were provided to help her manage her workload more effectively and build confidence in her ability to succeed. Early support enabled her to settle into both her apprenticeship and workplace responsibilities, helping her maintain engagement and avoid becoming overwhelmed during the early stages of employment.

O.J.

O.J. found the demands of balancing work and apprenticeship commitments difficult during the early stages of the programme. Through mentoring conversations, he was encouraged to review how he managed his time and prioritised tasks.

After implementing new approaches, O.J. was able to regain control of his workload and reduce feelings of stress. He also became more confident in discussing concerns with his line manager and seeking support when needed. The development of regular communication with his manager helped address issues before they became barriers to retention.

A.S.

A.S. had become frustrated in his role as he felt he was regularly being allocated lower-level tasks and was not being given sufficient opportunities to demonstrate his capabilities. This had begun to affect his motivation and engagement at work, and he was considering raising his concerns directly with his employer in a way that may have damaged workplace relationships.

Through mentoring discussions, A.S. was supported to reflect on the situation and encouraged to take a more constructive approach. The mentor helped him prepare for a positive conversation with his employer, focusing on his desire to learn new skills, take on greater responsibility and continue developing within the business.

Following these discussions, A.S. approached the conversation differently and was able to communicate his aspirations professionally. As a result, his employer provided additional opportunities to develop new skills, increased his responsibilities on site and demonstrated greater trust in his abilities while continuing to provide appropriate supervision and guidance.

This intervention helped improve communication between employee and employer, increased A.S.'s job satisfaction and reinforced his commitment to remaining with both the employer and the construction industry.

8. Project Impact

These case studies highlight the importance of retention-focused mentoring during the early stages of employment. A consistent theme across participants was not a lack of technical ability, but challenges relating to confidence, communication, workload management, balancing work and learning responsibilities, and understanding how to access support when difficulties arose.

Through regular one-to-one mentoring, participants were supported to:

- Raise concerns with employers and training providers.
- Develop confidence to ask for help when required.
- Improve time management and organisational skills.
- Manage workloads and competing priorities.
- Recognise and build on their strengths and achievements.
- Strengthen relationships with employers and colleagues.
- Remain engaged in employment and career development.

The project demonstrated that relatively small interventions at the right time can make a significant difference to an individual's decision to remain in employment. By providing a trusted source of independent support, CYF helped participants overcome barriers, improve resilience and build confidence in their future within the construction industry.

The following examples demonstrate the impact of project support.

These examples reflect several common project outcomes, including:

- Increased confidence.
- Improved time management.
- Stronger workplace relationships.
- Improved apprenticeship progress.
- Greater resilience.
- Increased employee engagement.
- Improved retention.

9. Conclusion

What Worked Well

- The one-to-one mentoring model proved highly effective in supporting participants through the critical early months of employment.
- Phone calls and text messaging enabled regular and responsive communication, helping support workers identify issues before they became barriers to employment.
- Strong partnership arrangements ensured effective referrals and strengthened relationships across the construction sector.
- The introduction of enrichment sessions provided an additional mechanism for addressing common challenges experienced by participants.

Challenges

- The most significant challenge related to staffing requirements, particularly ensuring sufficient staff capacity to meet fluctuating demand while maintaining service delivery.
- Providing meaningful mentoring and retention support required a significant staff commitment, particularly when participants faced complex personal circumstances requiring ongoing intervention and support.
- Some participants required support with issues extending beyond employment, including housing concerns, financial pressures and wellbeing challenges.

Risks and Mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
Participant disengagement	Regular phone and text contact
Financial pressures affecting retention	Financial wellbeing support and referral to specialist services
Workplace conflict	Mentoring and communication support
Transport barriers	Advice, planning and referral support
Loss of employment	Rapid intervention and support into alternative work
Limited employer awareness	Employer engagement and promotional activity

Overall Assessment

The project was successful in delivering meaningful retention support to individuals entering construction employment. Feedback from participants and employers demonstrated the value of mentoring and wraparound support in helping people remain within the sector.

While outcomes were positive, future projects would benefit from funding arrangements that reflect the staffing resources required to deliver intensive retention support over extended periods.

Products

The project developed and delivered:

- CYF mentoring framework.
- Referral and engagement processes.
- Marketing and promotional materials.
- Financial Resilience enrichment sessions.
- Gambling Awareness enrichment sessions.
- Employer information resources.
- Partnership referral pathways.

These resources were shared throughout project delivery to support participant engagement and retention.

6. Recommendations

Based on project learning, the following recommendations are made:

1. Continue retention-focused mentoring support beyond job entry.
2. Embed mentoring into apprenticeship and workforce development programmes.
3. Expand enrichment sessions covering financial resilience, wellbeing and career development.
4. Strengthen employer engagement and awareness of retention support services.
5. Develop sustainable funding models that reflect staffing requirements.
6. Continue partnership working between employers, colleges, DWP, local authorities and training providers.

7. Include retention support within Employment and Skills Plans wherever possible.

We would like to thank all partners and stakeholders who contributed to the successful delivery of Construct Your Future.